

# Acupuncture in Australian general practice: practitioner characteristics

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## Abstract:

**Objectives:** To ascertain the extent of the use of acupuncture and the characteristics of general practitioners using acupuncture.

**Design:** Secondary analysis of 1996 Health Insurance Commission data on claims by all non-specialist medical practitioners for Medicare Benefits Schedule items for an attendance where acupuncture was performed by a medical practitioner.

**Main outcome measures:** Use of acupuncture by general practitioners and the practitioners' sex, age, place of primary medical qualification, and the socioeconomic disadvantage index of the practitioners' practice.

**Results:** 15.1% of general practitioners claimed for acupuncture. Acupuncture was more likely to be provided by male practitioners, by those aged 35-54 years, and by practitioners who have an overseas primary medical qualification. The socioeconomic index of the practice did not significantly affect the number of claims for acupuncture.

**Conclusion:** Acupuncture is used by about one in seven general practitioners. Its use is associated with middle-aged practitioners, who presumably have more clinical experience. This level of use by experienced doctors suggests that a critical review of the appropriate role of acupuncture in general practice should be considered.

<http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/aug17/easthope/easthope.html>